



### K. J. Clark School of Math, Science, and Technology

50 Twelfth Avenue

Chickasaw, AL 36611

Principal: Dianne McWain

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As a magnet school, Clark attracts students from throughout Mobile County, a large area encompassing 1,644 square miles. The student body comes from parochial or private schools and as many as 60 public elementary schools, with a cross-section of the population in terms of socioeconomic background, race, religion, cultural heritage, and educational experiences. Mobile County magnet schools, created in the settlement of a desegregation lawsuit, are expected to maintain the 50-50 black to non-black racial ratio found at Clark.

- ◆ Middle (4–8)
- ◆ 55% Black
- ◆ 40% White
- ◆ 3% Asian
- ◆ 61% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Student enrollment at Clark is determined by a lottery in which there are no academic requirements for admission other than passing the grade the student is in at the time of application. As a result, the students arrive with very different backgrounds and levels of academic ability. Teachers work collaboratively to bridge the gap between students' initial levels of knowledge and experience and Clark's standards of proficiency required for promotion. Clark offers an after-school tutoring program, an in-house tutoring program that removes students from their scheduled classes to obtain extra help, and one-on-one sessions during class with the teacher to ensure that all students, even those who are struggling initially, succeed in the rigorous math program. Each teacher has after-school tutoring to provide help to students who need remediation or additional assistance.

Clark aims to increase its students' knowledge with each grade level. A good example of early work with the foundations of algebra is apparent in fourth grade when students study fractions. The fourth grade goal is to expose students to equivalent fractions and basic operations with fractions of like denominators. Some of the activities in the classroom might include making fraction bars and grids, and the elementary teachers use different colors with the bars and grids to help students "see" the fractions.

In fifth grade classes, students use operations with like and unlike denominators. Teachers also expose students to canceling when multiplying fractions and putting fractions in lowest terms. Operations with mixed numbers also are introduced, and by the end of fifth grade, teachers expect students to be proficient with operations with fractions of like denominators and to be able to find equivalent fractions. The sixth graders are expected to master these skills, in addition to changing fractions to decimals and then changing decimals to percents. In the "core plus" curriculum, teachers begin the process of teaching students to work with positive and negative fractions and mixed numbers early. In the seventh grade, students aim to master these skills.

Typical classrooms use a hands-on approach to help students understand key concepts. All of the teachers use games with fractions and white boards in the classroom to encourage students to be proficient. Sixth grade math teacher Angela Rocker said that her students enjoy “Fraction Face-Off,” in which a small group of students will be given a fraction problem and race to get the correct answer. The winner of the game will face a new group of challengers. Students use white boards to check for understanding. All of the students in the class are required to do a specific problem and hold up their answer on the boards.